



United States Senator • Oregon

Gordon H. Smith



gsmith.senate.gov

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Dear Friends:

I want to update you on several vital issues Congress has debated this year that affect you and your family.

This newsletter will update you on my efforts to build on our legislative successes and take on the challenges facing every Oregonian. High on the list of challenges is the cost of health care, rising prices at the gas pump, and the quality of our education. The newsletter also includes important information on how you can avoid becoming the victim of identity theft or fraud.

As the Chairman of the Special Committee on Aging, I am working on more ways to help Oregonians save for retirement. In addition, I am spearheading efforts in the Senate promoting stem cell research and increasing funding for health care research.

Oregon families face many challenges. High energy prices call for innovative thinking, and I believe that we must further develop alternative energies like fuel cells, solar power, and wind energy. I also support legislation designed to lessen America's dependence on foreign oil and create safe and environmentally friendly options for motorists.

While we have many challenges before us, I believe that if we work together, in a bipartisan fashion, we will achieve our goals and provide Oregonians with more opportunities and an improved quality of life. As always, I look forward to hearing your questions, concerns, and suggestions.

Warm regards,

Pushing for Alternative Energy

There are two questions I always get asked by Oregonians who are concerned by the prices at the pump: Are we being cheated? If not, how long will these prices last?

I share both concerns and, last year, I requested that the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) investigate accusations of diesel fuel price gouging in Oregon. The FTC reported that several supply disruptions in the Pacific Northwest, including multiple outages in Washington refineries, led to the increase. I remain concerned about the cost of fuel and following Hurricane Katrina, I introduced the Post-Disaster Consumer Protection Act (S. 1743). My legislation would prohibit price gouging of oil and gas products in the immediate aftermath of a disaster.

Whatever the cause of the current energy costs, it is clear that we need to find more efficient, less expensive, and more environmentally-friendly forms of energy. I believe our future lies in alternative fuels and Oregon can lead the way in its production. Already, plant and animal material known as biomass is being converted to energy in Medford, Prineville, and Lakeview. Recently, I urged federal officials to expand renewable energy development including wind, solar, and geothermal projects.

Oregon's natural resources can help free the nation from both the high costs of fuel and the problems of energy dependence. The time has come to move beyond fossil fuels and toward a future of clean, affordable, and dependable energy. You can be sure that I will do everything I can to help make that future a reality.

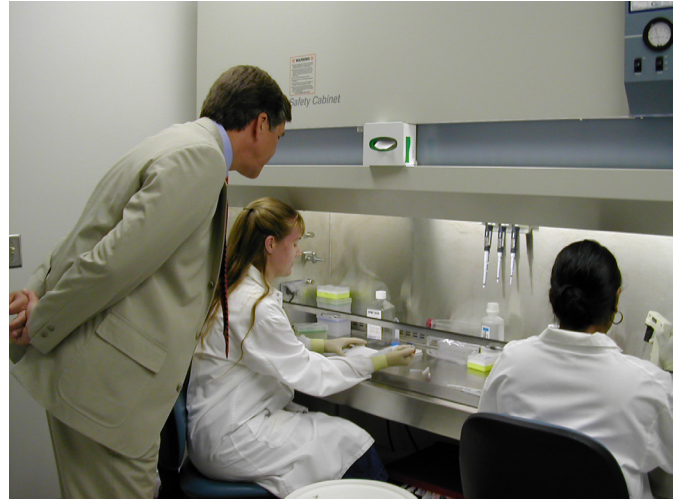


"I believe that Oregon's natural resources can help free the nation from both the high costs of fuel and the problems of energy dependence."

Finding Cures

As our population ages, it is increasingly important to find cures and new treatments for the diseases and conditions that affect the lives of millions of Americans. Like many Oregonians, my own family has been touched by diseases such as cancer and Parkinson, and I have always been a strong supporter of increased funding for medical research. In 1998, I voted to double funding for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) over the course of five years. In 2004, I supported a \$900 million increase, allocating a total of \$27.9 billion. Oregon Health Science & Science University received over \$200 million in federal funding that same year.

I am also a strong support of stem cell research, and I worked to pass the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act (H.R. 810). Not only does such research have the potential to ease the suffering of millions of Americans, but it may also yield researchers the ability to generate cells and tissue that could be used for tissue and organ transplants, increase our understanding of human developments, and improve the efficacy of pharmaceutical drugs. I will continue to work to ensure that the federal government plays an important role in funding these efforts.



Senator Smith observes Oregon scientists researching cutting-edge medical treatments.

Making Education More Accessible

Rapid advances in the technology are transforming the American economy. Oregon, with its first-rate schools and forward thinking citizens, only stands to gain from these changes. We need to continue improving all levels of education from preschool to the university.

I believe that Head Start is one of the most important programs administered by the federal government. This program serves low-income families and prepares children 5 years of age and younger for school. Last year, nearly 9,000 Oregon children were enrolled and local Head Start programs received nearly \$60 million in federal funding. I will continue working to increase resources available to Oregon.

I have also been working to make a college education more accessible for Oregonians. I am working to pass three bills in particular that will help students achieve their goals:

- ☒ The Hope Scholarship Expansion Act (S. 1697) extends the Hope Scholarship Credit to cover fees, books, supplies, and equipment needed by college students.
- ☒ The Student Aid Reward Act (S. 754) offers colleges additional student aid scholarship money to select the less expensive option when choosing between direct lending and bank loans.
- ☒ The College 529 Invest Act (S. 1112) Qualified Tuition Programs, also known as 529 Plans, allow you to save money in a tax-deferred account to pay for higher education expenses. Currently, withdrawals from these accounts are tax-free, but unless Congress acts, this tax-free status will expire in 2010. S. 1112 would make this important benefit permanent.

The ability to change lives is one of the most rewarding parts of my job as a United States Senator. Programs like Head Start and innovative thinking can truly expand opportunities for our children, and I will continue working to make them a reality. I also know that the best ideas often come from our communities, and I would appreciate hearing your thoughts and suggestions about improving our school system.

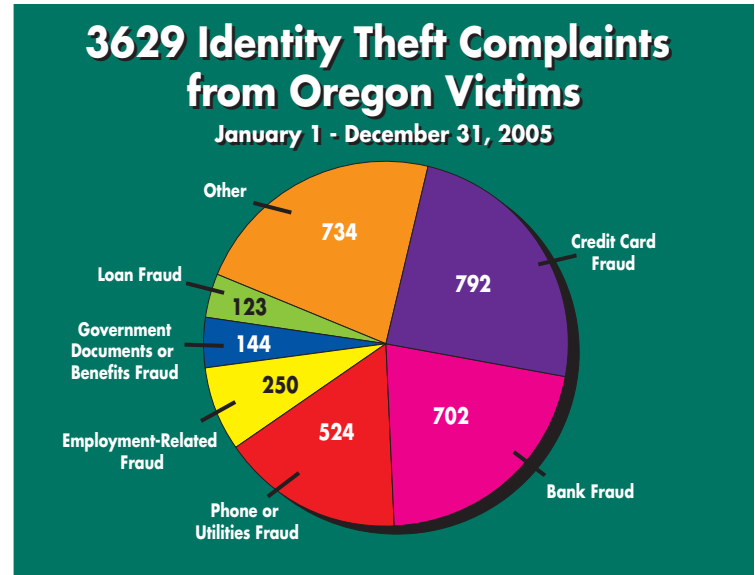
Protecting Yourself from Identity Theft and Fraud

The Internet and other technological advances have brought great benefits in recent years. They have also given criminals more opportunities to prey on consumers. Americans lose over \$53 billion per year to identity fraud. Telemarketing scams costs an additional \$40 billion dollars. According to the Federal Trade Commission, there were almost 9,000 complaints of identity theft and fraud in Oregon last year. These crimes cost Oregonians over \$20 million, and we know many more go unreported.

The Senate has already passed my legislation, the U.S. Safe Web Act (S. 1608) which fights consumer fraud on the Internet. I also introduced the Identity Theft Protection Act (S. 1408) to provide new safeguards against consumer data breaches and create national standards for protecting personal information. I hope that Congress will pass my legislation in the coming months, but it is also important to protect yourself. Here are a few tips:

- Use passwords on your all your financial accounts and do not use common information like your birth date
- If strangers, such as repairmen, will be in your home, keep your personal information secure
- At doctor's offices and other businesses that collect personal information, ask about security procedures
- Never give out personal information on the phone, through the mail, or on the Internet unless you are sure with whom you are dealing
- It is a safer to use a post office collection box than your home mailbox. It is also smart to shred documents that contain financial or personal information

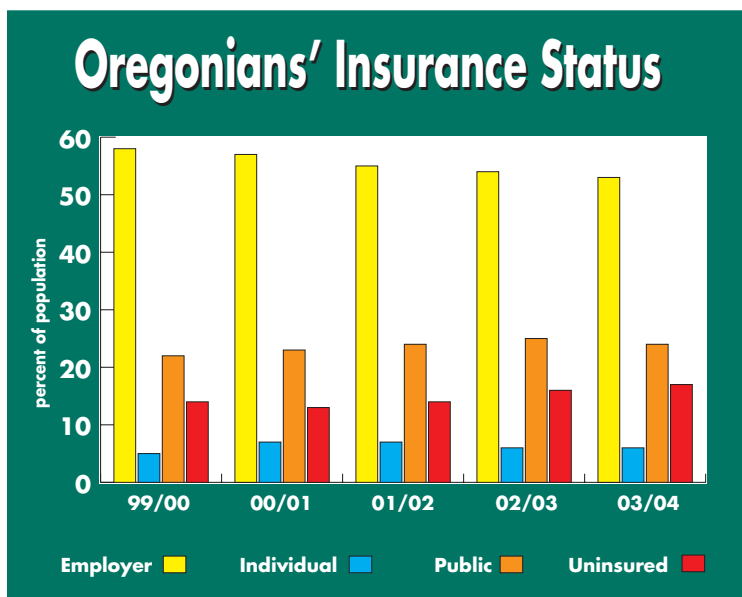
To learn more, you can find information on the Internet at www.consumer.gov/idtheft/ddd/. If you have been victimized, you can call the Oregon Department of Justice victim assistance line toll free at 1-800-503-7983.



Addressing the Rising Costs of Health Care

The high cost of health care can be a drain on any family's budget. Even with insurance, bills for treating serious illnesses or injuries can quickly add up. To safeguard against health care costs and to support uninsured Oregonians, I recently partnered with Senator Ron Wyden to write the Catastrophic Health Coverage Promotion Act.

Our legislation creates four demonstration projects aimed at helping the uninsured and those with catastrophic health care costs. Oregon would receive at least one of these projects.



Two of the programs will help states offer a health insurance plan that combines a basic health care benefit with high-deductible catastrophic coverage. Uninsured people and small businesses will be eligible and extra assistance will be provided to workers and families with low-incomes.

Two additional programs will help cover costs for insured people with very high out-of-pocket expenses.

In 2004, over 600,000 Oregonians went without insurance. This fact not only hurts individuals but also drives up the costs for everyone. There are over \$500 million in unpaid hospital bills each year in Oregon. These costs are shifted to the public in the form of higher premiums and health care bills. I believe that people should not have to choose between paying the rent and going to a doctor. Our legislation will target help to those most in need and will help lower health care costs for everyone.

How To Contact Senator Smith:

I always look forward to hearing from Oregonians, whether they want to share their thoughts about a particular issue or if they just need help navigating the sometimes daunting federal bureaucracy. Please feel free to contact me by phone, mail, or email, whichever is most convenient for you.

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